Scene in Lit'ry New York. Old-Fashioned Party Tries to Buy a Copy of The Atlantic Monthly at a News-Stand

Drawn by L. M. GLACKENS.

SWEEPINGS FROM INKPOT ALLEY

By TANSY M'NAB

According to many of our contemporary novelists, the old fairy tale finale "so they were married and lived happily ever after," is—merely a fairy tale. Most persons who have been married one or more times will concede that it is somewhat exaggerated, or at least an inadequate statement of the case.

MARRIAGE AND THE THREE W'S.

When Ibsen, some years ago, had his Nora walk out of her Doll's House, quitting husband and children, we were all profoundly shocked. Respectable married ladies never acted that way. It wasn't done. It was intimated that Nora was not a nice person. The British censor (not the same one that now opens all our seagoing letters) felt so outraged about her that he would not permit "A Doll's House" to be produced on the British stage.

We have gone a long way since then. Bernard Shaw has said some bitter things about the evil influence of family life, and our own Robert Herrick has drawn harsh pictures of marriage as it is practised in these United States. Neither Mr. Shaw nor Mr. Herrick has been put in jail, though few of us would admit that marriage is as awkward as they paint it. It is pleasanter to turn to the studies of married life portrayed by the three W's—Henry Kitchell Webster, H. G. Wells and Jesse Lynch Williams.

Mr. Williams's book, "The Married Life of the Frederic Carrolls," is of much lighter calibre than either Mr. Wells's "Marriage" or Mr. Webster's "Real Adventure," but it is noteworthy because Mr. Williams is the first author to have the temerity to muckrake the honeymoon. He shows us that instead of being all roses and raptures a honeymoon is not infrequently a bore. In fact, he gives us intimations of the petty tragedies that crowd into the average honeymoon. He might have gone further than he did.

It is no easy thing for a bridegroom, for instance, to realize that he has lost all title to the top bureau drawer forever. Nothing so quickly takes the joy out of a bride's life as to find a cigarette stump on her powder box and ashes in her pet pintray. I know of a young woman who had the darkest thoughts about the future because her new husband draped his socks, with their ugly attachments, over a chair every night. She thought of all the mornings to come when her first view of the universe must consist of those unspeakable gartered socks. I also know of a young man who felt that he could never become reconciled to the presence of cold, detached hairpins.

But we do become reconciled to these annoyances. We forget them. As time goes on Mrs. McNab does not notice my garters any more than I notice her hairpins. Married life is a succession of more or less difficult adjustments, some of which Mr. Williams cleverly portrays, and if we are good sports and love each other we get through them. We become transformed and domesticated, and we find ourselves thinking a great deal about the children. Bernard Shaw says that most of us get entirely too domesticated for our own good; and there may be some truth in that.

Messrs. Wells and Webster, in "Marriage" and "The Real Adventure," respectively, show what happens when the good ship Matrimony is embarked on more tempestuous waters and comes near to shipwreck. Incidentally, Mr. Webster shows us what Nora—in his book her name is Rose—did when she went away.

Mr. Webster's Rose marries a lawyer who is interested wholly in the science of his profession, and Mr. Wells's Marjorie marries a scientist interested wholly in chemical research. Both young women have an instinct for decorative beauty. Marjorie gratifies this in purchasing beautiful things and running up bills that swamp her professor-husband's modest income. Rose's husband, on the other hand, takes the initiative in making his house a place of luxury for the woman he loves. The result is that both husbands have to become money-grubbers. The American puts aside his scientific detachment and goes after a big practice. The Briton quits his laboratory and commercializes his discovery of synthetic rubber.

Meanwhile the two women have not gained in happiness. They have nothing to do. There are children, but there are many servants.

"The house," complains Marjorie to her husband, "doesn't give me an hour's mental occupation in the day. . . . I can't make jam or do ornamental needlework. The shops do it better and cheaper, and I haven't been trained to do it. I've been trained not to do it. I've been brought up on games and school books and fed on mixed ideas. I can't sit down and pacify myself with a needle as women used to do. I'm no artist. I'm not sufficiently interested in outside things to spend my time in serious systematic reading. . . . You see, you've got a life—too much of it; I haven't got enough. I wish almost I could sleep away half the day. Oh, I want something *real*, Rag; something more than I've got. . . . What on earth am I to *DO*?"

Rose, like Marjorie, finds that by marrying her lover she has made a comparative stranger of him. They have no common mental stimuli. Rose discusses the matter with a psycho-analyst, who is a friend of her husband. He answers her questions by taking up the case of a hypothetical Darby and Joan who fall in love.

"They fall victims," he says, "to the dangerous illusion that they are intellectual companions. They think they are having wonderful talks. All they are doing is long-circuiting their sex attraction. Well, marriage gives it a short circuit. Why should the current light the lamps when it can strike straight across?"

"And poor Joan," says Rose, "who has all along thought she was attracting a man by her intellect, her understanding and all that, wakes up to find that she's been married for her long eyelashes and her nice voice—and her pretty ankles. That's a little hard on her, don't you think, if she's been taking herself seriously?"

"Nine times in ten," he says, "she's fooling herself. She's taken her own ankles much more seriously than she has her mind. She's capable of real sacrifices for them—for her sex charm, that is. . . . Intelligence she regards as a gift. She thinks the witty conversations she's capable of after dinner, or the bright letters she can write to a friend, are real exercises of her mind—real work. But work isn't done like that. Work's overcoming something that resists—and there's strain in it, and pain and discouragement."

Rose decides to transform herself from a Gibson girl to an Ibsen girl. She quits her Doll's House, after an ineffectual attempt to study law, and capitalizes her excellent ankles. In other words, she goes into the chorus. She resists her husband's well meaning attempts to lure her back. She goes on and by an easy transition passes into the business of making theatrical costumes and achieves great success.

Of course, in the end her husband comes round. He sees, or pretends to see, that Rose is not a doll, but a regular person. So she goes home again. Mr. Webster does not tell us whether she continues her business, but the reader infers that she does not. There is really no reason why a healthy young woman, with no household obligations, should not go to the office at eight-thirty every morning and get home about six. But usually she doesn't. One supposes that Rose, having gained her point, returned more or less happily to the stern business of wearing clothes rather than making them, of giving and receiving dinner parties, of occupying a box at the opera every Monday.

Marjorie's husband, being an Englishman—a Wells Englishman, that is—takes the solution of their marital problem into his own hands. He, not Marjorie, is the one that wishes to run away. But Marjorie insists on going with him. So they quit the Doll's House together, leaving the children behind in a highly sanitary environment, and rush off to Labrador. There, in the course of an adventurous winter spent alone in the wilderness, their mutual dependence brings them together again. In their lonely hut they talk together for months without the slightest strain, though, because Marjorie's husband is a Wells Englishman, she does not have the opportunity to do much of the talking.

In the spring they go back to London. Marjorie makes good resolutions about abstaining from running up bills, and her husband resolves to quit synthetic rubber and take to writing books, creative and suggestive books. He confides his plans to Marjorie in the Labrador hut, and she, fresh from her good resolutions, immediately visualizes the handsome study she shall fit out for him, a tall room with a marble fireplace, rich green window curtains, dignified bookshelves, a great desk and a gleaming lump of symbolical Labradorite on the desk. She makes a mental note of the shops where she can get these furnishings.

One wonders if Marjorie can ever be anything else than a spender. Perhaps her daughters——

The problems of the wives of these stories may be summed up by inverting an old nursery rhyme:

There was a young woman;
Lived on the Ave*noo*,
She had so many servants
She didn't know what to do.

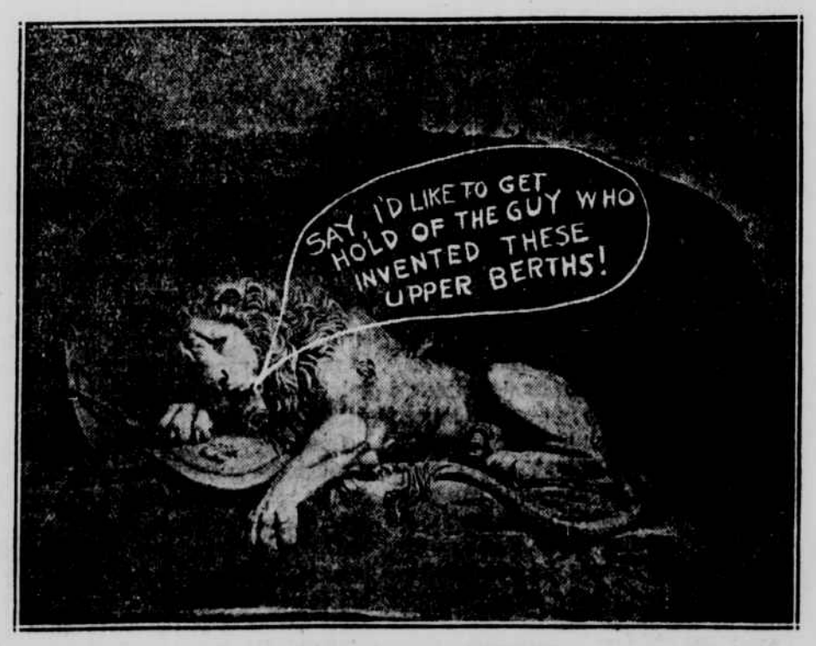
They are rich, vivid stories, beautifully told. Mr. Webster's, in particular, is one of the best of our modern American novels. But, after all, Mr. Williams's more trifling tale gets down nearer to the level of the problems that are more familiar to the average young wife.

Take, for instance, Marjorie Smith and Rose Jones. The chances of either of them marrying a man capable of becoming a great corporation lawyer or discovering synthetic rubber are so remote as to be laughable. It is almost inevitable that each will marry a man whose weekly pay envelope affords little more than the necessities. Each baby is not an unalloyed blessing—it is an economic problem. Marjorie Smith and Rose Jones have not too many servants. They are lucky if they can keep a single pot-walloping immigrant in the frugal kitchen. In most cases such a luxury is beyond their means. They never run off to adventure after individuality. They can't. If they did what would become of the kids? They do not chafe because they have little or nothing to do. They have entirely too much to do.

It is to be hoped that some day Mr. Webster and Mr. Wells will give us books dealing with the marriage problems of Marjorie Smith and Rose Jones, as vivid and illuminating as the studies they have given of these marriages *de luxe*. Of course, such books would be very difficult to do. Perhaps nobody would be capable of doing them, except Marjorie Smith and Rose Jones.

And they will never have the time.

EMOTIONS INTERPRETED, or ART MADE CLEAR



III—THE LION OF LUCERNE.